



## Discussion Group Packet



## **Film Discussion Guidelines**

Next week you will be leading the class in a discussion of the film you just saw. In other words, you will be teaching the class. That's kind of scary at first, but most of the students who have done it really seemed to enjoy it and got a lot out of it. Most of the groups have done some very good things. Here are some guidelines to help you make your class successful:

- Plan enough activities to teach the entire class period. In reality I will need about 5-10 minutes at the end of class to talk about the next film, etc., but it is better for you to have too many activities than not enough.
- The most important thing about class discussion is to involve the class as much as possible. Some ways to do this:
  - Break the class up into small discussion groups of about 5 students to talk about questions you ask.
  - Write the questions you want students to discuss on the board and make sure they know what you want them to do.
  - When students are discussing among themselves all the members of your group should scatter around the room listening in on discussions to help students as necessary and to make sure that they are speaking English.
  - If students aren't responding to your questions it's OK to call on them anyway.
  - It's OK to use Chinese names when calling on students.
  - Have students stand when they talk. This makes it easier to hear them in the back of the room.
- Giving background information on the movie is OK but please don't use information from the textbook; students can read this for themselves. The internet is a great source of new information. Please limit background information and plot summaries to about 5 or 10 minutes.

## Activities for Film Discussions

**Important:** All activities *must* be directly related to the movie. Party games and other activities not related to the movie are not allowed.

You can use any or none of these ideas; it's up to you:

1. Write some discussion questions on the board and divide the class into groups to talk about them. You can use some of the questions in this packet and/or questions on the homework assignments. (The post-viewing homework is especially good for finding discussion questions.) Better yet, make up some questions of your own.
2. Move groups up to sit in the front of the class instead of at their tables.
3. Game: this game is a variation on Count-7. Before class your group writes questions about the movie on strips of paper and puts them into a container. During class have students count off starting with 1. When a student gets any number with 7 (7, 17, 27, etc.) or a multiple of 7 (14, 21, 28, etc.) in it, they must say "pass." If they say the number, they must come to the front and draw a question from the container and either answer it or call on someone from the class to answer it.
4. Write up a summary of the movie plot and then print a copy for each group. Cut the copies into strips, one paragraph or sentence on each strip. Mix up the strips and give them to the groups. The groups have to put the strips in the right order.
5. Have students imagine what happened to the characters 5-10 years after the movie was over.
6. Have students write their own questions about the movie then ask them to the class.
7. For the last activity, ask every student in the class to rate the film in stars, 5 stars being great, 4 good, etc. and tell why they think so. Tally the number of stars on the board using English-type tally marks (ⅢⅢⅢ).

## **Shawshank Redemption**

### **Possible Topics for Class Discussion**

1. What is the purpose for putting people in prison? Is it punishment, rehabilitation, society's revenge for their crimes, to protect society from criminals, a combination of all these things? Something else?
2. What do you know about prisons in China? How do you think prison life in China compares to that shown in the film?
3. Read "IV Compare These Scenes." on pages 124-5. Discuss how Red's parole hearings change over time. How do you feel about his final speech on 'rehabilitation'? What has Red learned during his time in Shawshank?
4. The prison warden, Samuel Norton, is a very religious man who often quotes the Bible, but he is also very corrupt, stealing money and even having a prisoner killed. How can this be?
5. Near the beginning of the film, Red asks Andy why he killed his wife. Andy replies that he didn't do it, and Red says "Everyone's innocent in here, don't you know that?" What is Red really saying? What does this line tell us about many people in prison?
6. How would you describe Andy's character? What was it about him that enabled him to survive and even thrive in prison?

*Adapted from [www.damaris.org](http://www.damaris.org)*

1. Why is the film called *The Shawshank Redemption*? How would you explain *redemption*? How does one get redemption?
2. How is the concept of freedom represented and described in the film? (Consider the moments when Andy earns the beers for his co-workers, plays the Mozart opera over the loudspeakers and finally escapes).
3. How would you describe the friendship between Red and Andy? Why and how does it become so strong?

*Adapted from [www.ransomfellowship.org/](http://www.ransomfellowship.org/)*

1. *Hope* is a central theme of this film. In this excerpt Andy and Red are arguing about having hope in prison:

**ANDY** ... there's a small place inside of us they can never lock away, and that place is called hope.

**RED** Hope is a dangerous thing. Drive a man insane. It's got no place here. Better get used to the idea.

Do you agree with Andy or Red? Why?

2. Several times in this film, things happen that Red says made people feel free—like drinking beer on the roof or listening to the Italian opera. How did these things make the prisoners feel free?
3. This film has a strong contrast between a dreary, gray world and an ongoing discussion of hope. What does this tell you about the value of a “point of view?”
4. Andy says, “I killed her, Red. I didn’t pull the trigger, but I pushed her away. That’s why she died, because of me.” On what basis should we accept responsibility for our lives? Are we only responsible for things we do, or are we responsible for who we are? Why?
5. How are sex and violence used in this film? Are they used gratuitously or are they used to support the narrative and main ideas of the film? Explain. Is there ever a right way to incorporate sex and violence into a film?
6. What do you think is the main idea of this film? In other words, what makes it a story worth telling?